

MINUTES
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission Meeting
FWP Headquarters – 1420 East 6th Avenue - Helena, MT
SEPTEMBER 25, 2008

Commission Members Present: Steve Doherty, Chairman; Shane Colton, Vice-Chair; Dan Vermillion (via telephone); Willie Doll.

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Director Jeff Hagener and FWP Staff.

Guests: See September 25, 2008 Commission file folder for those who signed in.

A work session followed the meeting for a presentation entitled *Research Presentation: Elk Movements in the Madison, Gallatin, and Yellowstone River Watersheds*.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes of August 5, 2008
3. Approval of Commission Meeting Minutes of August 28, 2008
4. Approval of Commission Expenses through August, 2008
5. Revisit the November Commission Meeting Date
6. Cornwell Ranch Conservation Easement - Final
7. Wolf Administrative Rule – Final
8. Elk Plan Objectives Adjustment - Final
9. 2008 Elk Harvest Quotas and Ranges for HDs 204, 261, and 270 – Final
10. 2008-2009 Game Damage Permit Authorizations – Final
11. Sheep and Goat Capture and Transplant – Final
12. Ekalaka Urban Deer Management Plan – Final
13. Future Fisheries July Funding Cycle – Final
14. Baldy Mountain and Gehring Ranch Conservation Easements – Endorsement
15. Exotic Wildlife Classification for Importation / Possession – Final
16. 2009 Non-Resident Combination License Rule – Tentative
17. Madison / Wall Creek Settlement Easement - Endorsement
18. Hagenston (Stipik) Fishing Access Site Acquisition - Endorsement
19. Logan Town Site Fishing Access Site Acquisition - Endorsement
20. Thompson Chain of Lakes Fishing Access Site - Crystal Lake Trade – Endorsement
21. Open Microphone – Public Opportunity to Address Additional FWP Issues

1. **Opening - Pledge of Allegiance.** Vice-Chairman Colton called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Approval of August 5, 2008 Commission Meeting Minutes.**

Action: Doll moved and Colton seconded the motion to approve the August 5, 2008 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

3. Approval of August 28, 2008 Commission Meeting Minutes.

Action: Vermillion moved and Colton seconded the motion to approve the August 28, 2008 meeting minutes. Motion carried.

4. Approval of the August, 2008 Commission Expense Report.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to approve the August expense report as presented. Motion carried.

5. Revisit the November 10 Commission Meeting Date. Due to Tuesday, November 11 being a state holiday, there was a question as to whether the Commission did indeed wish to meet on a Monday before a Tuesday holiday. It was confirmed that the Commission did indeed wish to meet on Monday, November 10.

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Director Hagener stated that The Ernest Thompson Seton Award, presented annually by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, was awarded this year to the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, of which Chris Smith has been the representative for Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The IGBC consists of state fish and wildlife agencies from Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Washington, the Canadian provinces of Alberta and British Columbia, the USDA Forest Service, the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the USDI Bureau of Land Management. The Commission, Director, and audience applauded Chris Smith for his and the committee's hard work.

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6. Cornwell Ranch Conservation Easement – Final. FWP has negotiated the terms of a conservation easement and management plan with the Cornwell Ranch. The result will be implementation of rest-rotation grazing systems throughout the ranch, along with cooperative efforts to enhance and restore native vegetation and dense nesting cover in portions of the Milk River corridor. The conservation easement will provide native prairie crucial to sustaining many grassland bird species, will provide permanent public hunting access to 24,000 deeded acres, will provide improved access to 104,000 public acres, and will provide fishing access to nine miles of the Milk River. The easement will also provide for continuation of the family ranching operation that was established in 1892.

Ken McDonald, FWP Wildlife Division Administrator, stated that the issues posed by DNRC have all been addressed, and Clark Wheeler explained the appraisal process at the last Commission meeting. McDonald said a concern was expressed that FWP is spending too much time and money in eastern Montana. He stated that over the last ten years FWP has obtained conservation easements statewide. He provided a spreadsheet indicating the locations of each.

Action: Colton moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to direct the Department to proceed with the purchase of the Cornwell Ranch Conservation Easement.

Chairman Doherty asked for comments. Director Hagener stated that Commissioner Workman had expressed his support for this acquisition through a telephone conversation the day before.

Action on Motion: Motion carried. Three in favor – one in opposition (Doll opposed).

7. Wolf Administrative Rule – Final. In 2001, the Montana Legislature authorized the Commission to reclassify wolves from an endangered species to a species in need of management upon federal delisting. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service delisted wolves from the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in early 2008, however that decision was challenged in court, and on July 18, 2008, a U.S. Federal Judge reinstated federal ESA protections in the northern Rockies through a preliminary injunction.

Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Management Bureau Chief, stated that Montana's wolf conservation and management plan was completed and federally approved in 2004. On June 12, 2008, the Commission directed FWP to initiate formal rulemaking to reclassify the wolf to a species in need of management, and to establish the manner and types of non-lethal and lethal wolf control methods that would be used to address conflicts. Included in the rule is a commitment to the preservation and management of the wolf and not to destroy them all. FWP proposes to complete rulemaking efforts at this time, with an effective date upon delisting from federal ESA.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to adopt the final ARM rules that reclassify the wolf to a species in need of management and direct conflict management, with an effective date upon federal delisting.

Colton thanked the Legal Unit for the hard work they put into this rule. Hagener stated that the Department is working with the USFWS toward obtaining the delisting status again. Wyoming is proposing language changes.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

8. Elk Plan Objectives Adjustment – Final. Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Management Bureau Chief, stated that this plan identifies annual opportunity for adjustment so when set into season setting we have a target. Recommended changes to the tentatives are as follows.

HD 210 – increase objective from 725 to ~~1000~~ **850**

HD 216 – increase maintain objective from at 325 to ~~450~~

Rock Creek EMU – increase objective from 2370 to ~~2770~~ **2495**

HD 212 – increase objective from 850 to ~~1500~~ **1000**

HD 212 - establish a sub-objective of 500 for publicly accessible elk; within the HD objective of 1000; Flint Creek EMU objective not influenced by this specific change

HD 213 – increase objective from 650 to 750

Flint Creek EMU – increase objective from 1500 to ~~2250~~ **1750**

HD 211 – **maintain objective at 600**

HD 214 – increase objective from 200 to 450

Sapphire EMU – increase objective from 3800 to 4050

HD 215 – increase objective from 1000 to ~~1200~~ 1400

Deer Lodge EMU – increase objective from 2100 to ~~2300~~ **2500**

HD 290/298 – establish objective at ~~800~~ **600** (new hunting district 298)

HD 291 – **maintain objective at 600**

HD 292 – decrease objective from 1100 to ~~900~~ 800

HD 293 – decrease maintain objective from at 750 to ~~500~~

Granite Butte EMU – ~~decrease maintain objective from at 2150 to ~~1900~~~~

HD 270 – establish a sub-objective of 2600 for publicly accessible elk; maintain HD objective of 3000; Sapphire EMU objective is not influenced by this specific change

Mike Thompson, FWP Region 2 Wildlife Manager, stated that the recommended changes are a result of structured public involvement. FWP and the Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association jointly formed the ten member Bitterroot Elk Working Group in 2004, and one of the group's first tasks was to assist in the development of the 2005 Elk Management Plan. The group is composed of two landowners, a local businessman, an area outfitter, a forester and one representative from the Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association, the Safari Club International, the Montana Bowhunter's Association, the U.S. Forest Service, and Fish, Wildlife & Parks.

Thompson said that as elk numbers are driven down to meet the Elk Plan objective of 3,000, the public is expressing concern, and requesting that FWP back off on the harvest level in HD 270 earlier than the Elk Plan says. The public comfort level with the elk numbers does not match the number specified in the objective for HD 270, therefore an adjustment in the objective is recommended.

In 2008, the Commission adopted new hunting district 298 in the Helmville Valley. There was no objective set for HD298, and the portions of adjacent HDs from which HD 298 was formed had to be adjusted accordingly. In this case, the Region had working groups in place to deal with the elk issues in the affected areas. The participants were important landowners and sportsmen who were personally contacted and invited to the meetings by the local biologists.

Thompson stated that the Helmville meeting was set to address HDs 290, 291, 293 and 298. Twenty-three people attended the meeting on August 28. On August 27, a meeting was held in Potomac to address HD 292, and was specifically located where the biggest game damage issues are focused. Twenty-three people attended this meeting as well.

Thompson said the driving force for the review of elk plan objectives in the Upper Clark Fork was a change in survey methodology. Biologist Ray Vinkey shifted from spring counts to winter counts, which increased his counts in some districts by about 15%. The Region was prepared to decrease objectives in spite of the upward direction indicated by improved survey methodology if the Working Groups came to that consensus. As a result of public involvement and collaboration, the proposed objectives vary from the tentative adoptions in HDs 210, 212, 215, 216, 292, 290/298, and 293, reflecting consensus arrived at with the public.

Thompson said "as a result, we ended up with a proposed sub-objective in HD 212 to conserve publicly accessible elk while providing ample opportunity to harvest elk on private land if access were granted. In contrast with HD 270, where the sub-objective pertains to the greater portion of the HD and the elk herd, the sub-objective in HD 212 would pertain to a relatively small proportion of the elk herd and a relatively small area on the west side of the district. So, HD 270 can be managed to meet the sub-objective with more of a district-wide regulation package, whereas antlerless permits tied to portions of the HD would be needed to implement the proposed direction in HD 212".

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to adopt as Final the Elk Plan objective changes as presented by FWP.

Chairman Doherty asked for public comment on the changes.

Steve Wilson, Ravalli County Fish and Wildlife, said they accept the subquotas with the idea that they might be addressed and changed as needed.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

9. 2008 Elk Harvest Quotas and Ranges for HDs 204, 261, and 270 – Final. Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Management Bureau Chief, stated that there are no changes to the tentatives.

Reduce the 2008 quota through the Darby Check Station that triggers closure of the antlerless portion of the brow-tined bull/antlerless season in HDs 204, 261 and a portion of 270 from 200 to 100 cow elk.

Reduce the 2008 total quota (season-long) through the Darby Check Station, which triggers closure of the antlerless portion of the brow-tined bull/antlerless season in the southern portion of HD 270, from 300 to 200 cow elk.

In HDs 204, 261, and a portion of 270, establish a quota range for 2008-2009 of 50 to 300 cow elk through the Darby Check Station.

In HD 270, establish a quota range for 2008-2009 of 100 to 400 elk through the Darby Check Station, which will close the southern portion of HD 270.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to adopt the Final 2008 Elk Harvest Quotas and Ranges for HDs 204, 261 and 270 as proposed by the Department.

Chairman Doherty asked for public comment.

Steve Wilson, Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association, expressed concern that two years ago there were over 2,000 elk in HDs 240 and 250, and now there are only 200. It is a serious problem. There is a large predator problem there. Wolves and mountain lions are reducing the resource. FWP needs to be conservative and should reduce the quota to two. He said cattle and sheep producers are compensated, and asked when sportsmen will be compensated as they spend a lot of money and want their money's worth.

Mike Thompson, FWP Region 2 Wildlife Manager, said the total across the hunting districts in the Bitterroot were 7,000 last year, and under 6,000 this year. FWP has taken the management approach, and adjusted down from higher permit levels. He stated that predators are definitely killing wildlife, however hunters have also reduced numbers in public hunting areas.

Dale Burk, Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association, believes that serious down turns will be faced in the upper Bitterroot districts. In the original Elk Working Plan there was no mention of wolf involvement, but that component was included in the 2002 revision. There are 15 wolf packs in the Bitterroot.

Action on Motion – motion carried.

10. 2008-2009 Game Damage Permit Authorizations – Final. Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Management Bureau Chief, stated there were no changes to the tentatives.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to table this topic until the October Commission meeting to allow Commissioner Vermillion the opportunity to participate in the decision since it is part of his district. Motion carried.

11. Sheep and Goat Capture and Transplant – Endorsement. Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Management Bureau Chief, explained that the proposal is to relocate approximately 60 sheep from Sun River (HDs 422 and 424) to Utah, and approximately 15 goats from Crazy Mountains (HD 313) to Ear Mountain WMA. Washington was originally included in the sheep proposal, however they have since decided they do not want any sheep at this time. This Mountain Goat effort is associated with SCI as far as costs and operations. The release will happen in January 2009. In-state releases will be ready by January 2010.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to endorse the sheep transplants as presented by the Department.

Chairman Doherty asked for public comment.

Jim Weatherly, FNAWS, stated that the resource comes first. They want to see the number increased with good management. Last year ninety head were transplanted within the state. More transplant sites need to be identified in Montana. Bands of ewes that are close to road access get wiped out. FNAWS is willing to help in any way they can. They support transplanting to Utah. They would like to see the receiving states pay for lab costs as well as transplant costs.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to endorse the mountain goat transplants as presented by the Department.

Chairman Doherty asked for public comment. There was none.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

12. Ekalaka Urban Deer Management Plan – Final. Quentin Kujala, FWP Wildlife Management Bureau Chief, stated that the proposal is to allow archery hunting within Ekalaka's city limits. Carter County officials and the Sheriff's office are involved in the proposal.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to adopt the Final Ekalaka urban deer plan as presented by FWP Motion carried.

13. Future Fisheries July Funding Cycle – Final. Chris Hunter, FWP Fisheries Division Administrator, explained that twice each year the Future Fisheries Panel solicits proposals for projects that restore fishery habitats in streams, rivers, and lakes that benefit wild fish populations. Eight projects have been forwarded to the Commission for approval at a cost of \$177,196, with matching funds or in-kind contributions from outside sources totaling \$167,290.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to approve the Future Fisheries Panel recommendations. Motion carried.

14. Baldy Mountain and Gehring Ranch Conservation Easements – Endorsement. Chris Hunter, FWP Fisheries Division Administrator, explained that FWP proposes to purchase a conservation easement on approximately 5,000 acres of land on or adjacent to the Baldy Mountain and Gehring Ranch properties south of Lincoln. Funding would come from the federal Native Fish Habitat Conservation Program grant that was awarded to FWP in 2008. The lands are important habitat for cutthroat trout, lynx, grizzly bears, and forest carnivores. About 2,000 acres of the project are former Plum Creek Timber Company lands recently purchased by The Nature Conservancy as part of the Blackfoot Challenge's Blackfoot Community Project. The Nature Conservancy hopes to sell its holdings to the Baldy Mountain and Gehring Ranches encumbered with a conservation easement held by FWP. The Ranches have expressed interest in selling conservation easements to FWP on portions of their land as part of this project. The ranches would continue to manage the lands for traditional agricultural purposes and would strive to restore native fish habitat. The Nature Conservancy and the ranch owners agree to donate a portion of the conservation easement's value to satisfy the NFHCP match requirement.

Action: Colton moved and Vermillion seconded the motion to endorse FWP's continued negotiations with The Nature Conservancy and both ranch owners to develop acceptable conservation easement terms, conduct a baseline inventory, and for FWP to begin the public scoping process.

Chairman Doherty asked for public comment.

Rod Bullis, Bitterroot Houndsmens Association, recommended that the Commission endorse this proposal. It will give the owners a better opportunity to enhance the stewardship of the land, will enhance access issues, and will compliment other areas. Roads are already in place going to state lands.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

15. Exotic Wildlife Classification for Importation / Possession – Final. Eileen Ryce, FWP Aquatic Nuisance Specialist, stated there were no changes to the tentatives. Proposals included the classification of cranes as controlled, rails as controlled, the teita falcon as controlled, the small spotted genet as prohibited, and a revision to the rule to provide for “sanctioned” rescue facilities to temporarily house prohibited species until the animals are relocated. No comments were received and nobody attended the hearing.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to approve the final administrative rules and proceed with the administrative rule making process. Motion carried.

16. 2009 Non-Resident Combination License Rule – Tentative. Neal Whitney, FWP License Bureau Business Analyst, stated that the Variable-Priced Licensing Advisory Council met in Helena on August 18, 2008 to prepare fee recommendations for the 2009 outfitter-sponsored licenses, which were sold above the quota in 2008. By statute, fees for these licenses must be set at a market rate intended to sell as close to, but not more than, *an average* of 5,500 B-10 licenses and 2,300 B-11 licenses per year, over five years. The council unanimously recommended a quota of 4,750 licenses for the B-10 Outfitter Sponsored Big Game Combination license at \$1,500 per license, Outfitter Sponsored Elk Combination licenses at \$1,400 per license, and a quota of 1,800 licenses for the B-11 Outfitter Sponsored Deer Combination license at \$1,100 per license.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to direct the Department to proceed with public comment for the tentative Annual Rule. Motion carried

17. Madison / Wall Creek Settlement Easement – Endorsement. Bill Schenk, FWP Attorney, explained that this is a request for the Commission to endorse a proposed agreement to settle a dispute with nine landowners along the Madison River whose property is encumbered by an FWP easement. The settlement would involve a divestment of a portion of an easement that FWP owns along the Madison River approximately twenty miles south of Ennis. The easement was granted to FWP in 1958 for use as a road, with a clause that stipulated that it would revert to the grantors if it was not used.

Schenk explained that the easement lies in part along the Madison River, and links adjacent DNRC and BLM land with another section of DNRC land that lies to the north, but is cut off by the Madison River and a section of private land. It is over private land that was formerly owned by the Butler Development Company who granted the easement in 1958, but has since been subdivided into 20-acre tracts. The easement now burdens nine separate tracts, each with a different owner. Some tracts border the river, and some border a narrow piece of state land that borders the river.

Landowners in the subdivision requested that FWP relinquish the easement, purporting that the easement has been reverted to them. However, when their attorney attempted to record the “reversion” she was informed that she would need to have verification that the Department had agreed to the reversion. FWP is not interested in relinquishing the total easement, however Schenk has negotiated a tentative settlement in which FWP would relinquish the easement along only the lots that do not front along the river, and would redraft the easement to retain walk-in and non-motorized access.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to endorse proceeding with the proposed settlement of the Wall Creek easement controversy.

Chairman Doherty asked for public comment.

An unidentified gentleman pointed out that the easement was in place when the landowners bought the property.

Rod Bullis said this situation is seen all over Montana when access to public land crosses private land. He questioned how much the landowners are willing to pay for abandonment of this easement since it will increase the value of their land.

Tim Aldrich, Montana Wildlife Federation, said this deserves the attention of anyone wanting to use this portion of land for recreational uses. Please keep them involved.

Action on Motion: Motion carried.

18. Hagenston (Stipik) Fishing Access Site Acquisition – Endorsement. Joe Maurier, FWP Parks Division Administrator, explained that this 34-acre property is located halfway between Glendive and Intake, and would greatly enhance public access to the Yellowstone River. It would also provide access to a DNRC section of land across the river, and to a large BLM owned island a mile and a half downstream. This reach of the Yellowstone River receives approximately 18,600 angler days annually, and additional public access would increase the amount of use in this reach of the river. There is an active railroad crossing accessing the site that already has signage, and the slope, elevation, and visibility are good. Potential development of this site would include an improved gravel access road, fencing, signage, a boat ramp, parking area, and a vault latrine. The cost is estimated at \$179,000, and it would be purchased with Access Montana funds.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to authorize the Department to pursue acquisition of the Hagenston property. Motion carried.

19. Logan Town Site Fishing Access Site Acquisition – Endorsement. Joe Maurier, FWP Parks Division Administrator, explained that this 2.57-acre site consists of a series of 15 small lots within the town of Logan along the Gallatin River. A house and some small outbuildings were built on one lot in 1894 – the house was later converted to a motel. The house/hotel is not currently inhabited and would need extensive work to bring it up to modern day standards, so a determination will be made as to what to do with the structure. There is an earthen embankment the length of the property along the riverbank that may have been constructed by the CCC several decades ago for flood control purposes. Additional research will have to be done to determine the significance of this embankment. The property in front of the site belongs to the railroad, so an access agreement will need to be developed. Currently the public is using a steep, narrow bridge right-of-way one-half mile downstream from this site to access the river. The City was asking \$425,000 but accepted FWP's offer of \$325,000, contingent on Commission approval.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to authorize the Department to pursue acquisition of the Logan property. Motion carried.

20. Thompson Chain of Lakes Fishing Access Site - Crystal Lake Trade – Endorsement. Joe Maurier, FWP Parks Division Administrator, explained that this proposal is to trade approximately ½ acre of FWP land on the west side of Crystal Lake within the Thompson Chain of Lakes for a ½-acre private parcel of equal value on the east side of the lake that is immediately adjacent to a future boat launch. This trade would create a buffer between the FWP facility and residential dwellings and would also provide a location for FWP to place a seasonal staff member to maintain the site and surrounding campsites within the Thompson Chain of Lakes complex.

Action: Doll moved and Colton seconded the motion to pursue a land trade agreement with the Dobson family to trade approximately ½ acre of FWP property on Crystal Lake in the TCL FAS for the ½-acre Dobson cabin lot located adjacent to the future public boat launch. Motion carried.

18. Open Microphone – Public Opportunity to Address Additional FWP Issues.

David Harlacker, Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association, expressed his concern that wildlife resources are becoming privatized. Needs a determination between what is huntable wildlife and what is not. FWP has to maintain management of wildlife. He does not want to see the ranching community telling us what to do with the resources. He added that another issues he has deals with data collection money. In order for FWP to make sound decisions, they need data and trends. Do whatever is possible to fund flights for managing resources and gathering data.

Doll took exception to the remark about the ranching industry and resources. He stated that if it were not for ranches in Montana, there would be no hunting.

Steve Wilson, Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association, said Region 2 had a shortfall of money for surveys, and his group wants to see that corrected. His club has given \$2,500 to FWP for surveying. Places that used to be public are now private. He questioned how many new jobs have been created in FWP over the last five years, where do these people work, and what is the new job that was created in the Bitterroot. The houndsmen approached FWP asking for permits for lions, and now they have special licenses, and they are unhappy about that. He wants the boundary expanded for killing turkeys in the fall. He is upset by legislators getting into the fish and game business.

Kujala explained that the permit system in Region 2 was created after an extensive process. Colton concurred, saying that it was indeed an extensive process. Doll added that many folks from two different sportsmen's clubs from Ravalli County were at the meetings sharing their comments.

Dale Burk, Ravalli County Fish & Wildlife Association, said they were disappointed that the Commission did not hold this meeting in Hamilton as originally planned. He asked how many of the other regional meetings the Commissioners attended. They support the work that the Department and the Commission do, and extended an invitation to come to the Bitterroot. He suggested that the Department provide a bus to transport people to Commission meetings from outlying cities on a rotational basis so they can attend the meetings. He said all legislators should have to attend a Commission meeting because how can they make wildlife decisions if they don't know what the Commission does.

Doll stated that the Commission has held, and attended, all of the regional meetings that were scheduled, however he had suggested moving this one back to Helena because his district is so far away, and it is a busy time for ranchers.

Mary Ellen Schnurr noted that the target quota set in the proposal for nonresident licenses was reduced so that if that number is reached on March, license sales stop. Then it will not be possible to oversell and throw the 5-year average off kilter.

Rod Bullis said he is concerned about the Missoula Special Management Area. A plan needs to be in place to check the kill sites rather than wait for an illegal situation to occur.

Doll asked for clarification on the operation and funding of the Fort Peck Hatchery. Director Hagener said the majority of folks feel it should be operated as all of the other hatcheries are operated, and since it has the capacity to do so, it makes sense to use it for cold water fish as well as warm water fish. Using the hatchery for trout would alleviate the pressure of the two other hatcheries that raise trout, and the fish would not have to be trucked to the eastern part of the state, which would conserve costs. It is a state of the art facility that sits idle for several months a year because of the rules set on it. What is proposed is a phase-out of the warm water stamp, and a slight increase in fishing license fees to help cover the costs of operating the hatchery. Walleyes Unlimited is aware that there will be insufficient money to raise walleyes even though the warm water stamp fund still has a balance. Legislation is necessary to allow the Department to raise trout in the hatchery, and Senator Joe Tropila and Senator Keith Bales have agreed to carry the Bill. Doll asked that this information be printed in Montana Outdoors so the people of the state know.

Action: Colton moved and Doll seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Steve Doherty, Chairman

M. Jeff Hagener, Director